

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AS, FR PARM

SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE RTURNS HOME

FOR CONSULTATIONS ONFRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE, ALAN RENOUF, RETURNED TO AUSTRALIA AUG 8 FOR CONSULTATIONS OVER CONTINUING FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTING. IN STATEMENT TO THE PRESS IN SYDNEY RENOUF SAID HE THOUGHT A FORMAL BREAK IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WOULD NOT ACHIEVE MUCH. PERSISTENT PRESS REPORTS STATE RENOUF WILL BE APPOINTED SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (AUSTRALIA'S HIGHEST DIPLOMATIC POST) WHEN THE PRESENT INCUMBENT, SIR KEITH WALLER, RETIRES AT THE END OF 1973. END SUMMARY.

2. ALAN RENOUF, AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE, RETURNED TO CANBERRA FOR CONSULTATIONS AUG 8 IN THE WAKE OF SLOWLY BUT STEADILY GROWING TENSIONS IN FRANCO-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS AS A RESULT OF FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS IN THE PACIFIC. RENOUF RETURNED FROM PARIS VIA OTTAWA, WHERE HE BRIEFED PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM ON THE STATE OF FRANCO-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS DURING WHITLAM'S ATTENDANCE AT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE CURRENT COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTER'S CONFERENCE.

3. ON ARRIVAL IN SYDNEY RENOUF TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE THOUGHT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH FRANCE SHOULD BE BROKEN ONLY AS AN EXTREME MEASURE, ADDING THAT HE DIDN'T THINK SUCH A STEP WOULD ACHIEVE MUCH. HE SAID A BREAK IN RELATIONS WOULD END AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS IN FRANCE, INCLUDING TRADE PROMOTION AND IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS AND WOULD HAMPER THE MOVEMENTS OF AUSTRALIAN TOURISTS. HE NOTED THAT FRANCO-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS HAD BEEN QUITE SOURED AND QUITE BY FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTING IN THE PACIFIC AND BY CONSEQUENT AUSTRALIAN PROTESTS WHICH HAD ANNOYED AND EMBITTERED THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT. HE CONCLUDED, QUOTE EVERYTHING HAS BEEN DAMAGED BY THIS ONE ISSUE. END QUOTE.

4. RENOUF DECLINED TO COMMENT ON THE WIDESPREAD REPORTS THAT HE WILL BE APPOINTED SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (SENIOR AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMATIC POST) WHEN THE PRESENT INCUMBENT, SIR KEITH WALLER, RETIRES AT THE END OF 1973. HOWEVER, RENOUF SAID THAT IF THE POSITION WERE OFFERED TO HIM, HE WOULD BE HONORED TO ACCEPT IT. HE SAID, QUOTE YOU DON'T SPEND 30 YEARS IN LIFE TO REJECT THE TOP POST BE IT OFFERED TO YOU. IT WOULD BE A FASCINATING PROSPECT, END QUOTE. THE CANBERRA PRESS HAS CONTAINED NUMEROUS SPECULATIVE ARTICLES IN RECENT WEEKS ON THE PROBABILITY THAT RENOUF WILL REPLACE WALLER AT THE END OF THE YEAR.

5. COMMENT: RENOUF'S EVALUATION OF THE STATE OF FRANCO-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS IS QUITE ACCURATE. UNTIL 1972, AUSTRALIAN OPPOSITION TO FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTING IN THE PACIFIC HAD BEEN EXPRESSED, BUT IN GENERALLY POLITE TERMS WHICH FRANCE IGNORED, WITH EQUAL POLITENESS. HOWEVER, IN 1972, UNDER PRESSURE FROM NEW ZEALAND, THE AUSTRALIAN POSITION UNDER THE THEN LIBERAL-COUNTRY GOVERNMENT, HARDENED DRAMATICALLY. THE LABOR GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN AN EVEN HARDER POSITION, AND OPPOSITION TO FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS IS NOW A THEME OF AUSTRALIAN DELEGATIONS AT A WIDE VARIETY OF INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS. RECENT PUBLIC EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CANBERRA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA HAVE BEEN QUITE UNINHIBITED, AND FRENCH DIPLOMATS HERE HAVE INDICATED TO US ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS THAT THEY DO NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF A BREAK IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. MORE RECENTLY, FRENCH EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE GIVEN THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY DO NOT GREATLY CARE IF A BREAK OCCURS.

6. BRINGING RENOUF BACK AT THIS TIME, WITH THE PROBABILITY

THAT HE WILL BE APPOINTED TO SUCCEED SIR KEITH WALLER, SERVES GOA INTEREST FROM SEVERAL POINTS OF VIEW. IT EXPRESSES AUSTRALIAN OPPOSITION TO FRENCH TESTS BUT IN A WAY WHICH CANNOT BE INTERPRETED AS SOLELY RELATED TO FRENCH TESTS. OUTRIGHT RECALL OF RENOUF WOULD BE HARD FOR THE GOA TO HANDLE, FOR SUCH A STEP MIGHT LEAD TO DEMANDS THAT AUSTRALIA RECALL ITS AMBASSADOR TO THE PRC, STEPHEN FITZGERALD, TO EXPRESS SIMILAR OPPOSITION TO CHINESE NUCLEAR TESTING. PM WHITLAM OBVIOUSLY DOES NOT WANT TO DAMAGE AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS WITH THE PRC, HOWEVER ILLOGICAL HIS PRESENT STANCE MAY BE.

7. AMBASSADOR RENOUF HAS HAD A DISTINGUISHED CAREER IN THE AUSTRALIA FOREIGN SERVICE AND WAS WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN TO OFFICERS OF THE DEPARTMENT DURING HIS SERVICES AS MINISTER -COUNSELOR OF THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, 1963-65. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT AMPLE BIOGRAPHIC MATERIAL ON HIM IS AVAILABLE IN WASHINGTON.
HARROP

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